

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

As I look back on 2004, I am struck by a well-known cliché about life. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

I believe the examples you will read about on the following pages will illustrate and help you understand why I mention this cliché.

One example: childhood immunizations. In recent years, South Carolina found itself skyrocketing from the bottom of the state-by-state comparison of childhood immunization rates to the coveted number one spot. And since that time, we've consistently maintained a level that keeps us among the top five states in the country. In 2003, the last year for which data is available at this publication date, we found ourselves at number three.

And yet, as we reflect upon the success of this important public health program, we find ourselves faced with new challenges in public health we couldn't have imagined just one generation ago, including a growing epidemic of obesity and its related health problems, a national shortage and rationing of flu vaccines, an astounding number of hurricanes that tore through the southeastern United States, and continued preparations as part of the country's public health preparedness and bioterrorism programs.

The more things change, the more they stay the same.

For every success, there is a new challenge. And each time, our state is judged by its relativity to other states, never taking into account issues such as socioeconomic status of citizens, access to care, educational levels, cultural influences on the population base, and a host of other factors that make those comparisons somewhat like comparing apples to oranges. Which is one reason we take such pride in accomplishments like those of our childhood immunization program...or our Brownfields initiatives...or our CHAPS accreditation...or our Early Action Compacts to improve air quality. But we cannot rest on our successes.

So, how have we tried to approach these new challenges in the last year? By looking at the glass half full, rather than half empty...by realizing that this is the nature of public health and environmental protection...and by understanding that the only way we will make great strides in protecting the health of our people is by working together through partnerships with service providers, the regulated communities, nonprofit

and advocacy groups, policy-makers, elected officials, sister states, other state agencies, federal agencies, and the public at large. Only then will we be truly able to improve the health of all South Carolinians.

And that, after all, is the overarching goal we all share. We don't regulate hospitals and nursing homes for the sake of regulating. We don't regulate air emissions and liquid discharges from industries for the sake of the industries. We regulate our environment in order to protect human health. We do what we do to ensure that the generation that will come after us will live in a cleaner environment, be healthier and have a greater life expectancy than we do.

May all of us remain focused on what each of us can do to help in this endeavor. Our parents and their parents before them did so for us. In fact, since the early 1900s, the greatest strides in public health improvement have been made through environmental improvements and regulations. Let us never forget what their efforts have done to improve health outcomes for each of us. And let us never fall short of the commitment and effort that they showed.

Did we hold fast to that commitment and effort in 2004?

I believe we did.

But there is still much to be done in 2005 and all the years to follow. Because the more things change, the more they really do stay the same.

C. Earl Hunter



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ABOUT THIS BOOK

The title of this book reflects the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control's vision for the future of South Carolina, healthy people living in healthy communities. The long-term goals from the agency's Strategic Plan are defined and addressed within each broad chapter subject. The goals reflect our role as the state's public health and environmental agency in carrying out the three core functions of public health: assessment, policy development and assurance. The goals also build on national efforts in public health such as Healthy People 2010. These goals are statements of long-term changes that will move us toward our vision. For more information on Healthy People 2010, see page 69. Unless otherwise noted, data presented in this report represents calendar year 2003, the most current year available. Program activities described are typically for calendar year 2004. A general appendix with more detailed data begins on page 62.

Para información en español, comuníquese con su departamento de salud local (vea página 78).

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SC DHEC WHO WE ARE

The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control touches the life of every South Carolinian every day. From making sure that drinking water is clean to assuring immunizations are provided to the most vulnerable populations, the approximately 4,700 full-time employees and about 700 additional hourly/temporary employees provide services through state, district and county offices.

The General Assembly created DHEC in 1973 when it reunited the State Board of Health (created in 1878) and the Pollution Control Authority. The agency's mission is to promote and protect the health of the public and the environment. The agency is under the supervision of the Board of Health and Environmental Control, which has seven members, one from each congressional district and one at large. The governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, appoints members.

Besides our offices in Columbia, DHEC operates health and environmental district offices as well as local health departments and clinics to ensure that the many programs and services we provide will meet the needs of local areas. Our services fall under four general areas: Health Services, Health Regulations, Environmental Quality Control and Ocean and Coastal Resource Management.

Health Services includes activities to prevent chronic and infectious diseases; promote healthy mothers, babies and families; improve and assure environmental health in areas such as restaurant sanitation, septic tanks and mosquito control; perform laboratory analyses for infectious diseases and newborn screening; encourage the reduction of health disparities; and support seniors with in-home health care needs.

Health Regulations oversees the development of a State Health Plan to address the need for medical facilities and services; licenses, certifies and inspects health care facilities; regulates, licenses and inspects sources of electronically produced radiation (X-rays); and oversees entities that provide emergency medical services in the state.

Environmental Quality Control enforces federal and state environmental laws and regulations; issues permits, licenses and certifications for activities that might affect the environment; responds to complaints on environmental activities; inspects permitted entities; responds to environmental emergencies; and conducts environmental education and outreach activities.

Ocean and Coastal Resource Management enforces the S.C. Coastal Zone Management Act to protect coastal resources and promote responsible development through permitting and certification programs in the eight coastal counties.

DHEC's total budget for fiscal year 2004-2005, including state, federal and other funds, was \$537,290,963.

